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north of England; and the freight from so distant a port as Whitehaven—the monopoly in the hands of the great proprietors of the mines, as well as the uncertainty of the supply—these, with other causes, render the price of coal so high in this island, as to produce great distress amongst the poor, from the want of this necessary of life, and totally to incapacitate all those manufactures in whose operations great heat is required, from competing with those of the sister countries. Besides, by this trade, vast sums of ready money are annually drawn from the scanty resources of Irish capital. Mr. Finlay estimates the amount paid for the coals imported from England in 1821, at nearly £1,000,000, the quantity being 652,854 tons, of which Dublin consumed more than one third, or 267,470 tons. In 1831 we imported 851,424 tons, since which year the duty has been reduced to 4d. per ton, which is not chargeable on coal consumed in manufactures, and which small tax will be completely removed in a few years. We have not by us any account of the consumption of sea coal since 1831, but we have no doubt it has been much increased even by the trifling reduction produced by the removal of the duty. And yet, dependent as we are on England for so much of our fuel, it is a fact, now generally well known, though often denied, that Ireland possesses within her soil, beds of coal sufficient, not merely for her own use, but to supply the world. In seventeen counties of Ireland there are sure traces of coal in various degrees of plenty and quality—some, it is said, rivalling the best of the English coal, and some, though not so well suited for domestic purposes, admirably adapted for all the operations of manufacture. Yet such is the general ignorance and apathy on these points, that even the precise position and value of these mineral treasures are but imperfectly known. Beds of coal, and rich seams of metal, exist unworked or unattempted; or if some spirit more commercial or more adventurous has at times risen to combat the obstacles that, in Ireland, stand in the way of improvement, his individual and injudicious efforts, unaided by competent scientific knowledge, have in most cases wasted his capital and resources, and compelled him to retire in despair. In no branch of enterprise more than in that of mining, is the mischievous consequence of proceeding in ignorance more glaring. Witness the vast sums squandered in seeking for coal, in localities where a skilful geologist would at once have declared the search to be hopeless. Several thousand pounds were employed by the Grand Canal Company, in improving (as it was called) and extending the works of their collieries in the province of Leinster. This expenditure Mr. Griffith, in his “Survey of the Leinster Coal District,” denounces as most extravagant and injudicious. In the hills around Lough Allen, whence the Shannon takes its rise, are vast deposits of coal of a superior description, which, in 1822, (page 109,) was advertised for sale on the banks of the lake for 12s. a ton; the advertiser adding—“The proprietor regrets much his inability, under present circumstances, to afford them cheaper, having no road nor any mode of conveyance from the pits to the lake, but on horses’ backs, in small baskets.” We believe that up to the present moment little or no improvement has been effected; and this great magazine of fuel, sufficient to supply, for the commoner purposes at least, the whole of central Ireland, is still almost inaccessible. Much is expected from the completion of the Shannon navigation, for which commissioners are at present engaged in surveying; but a navigable river, however deep and secure, is totally useless, if there be not roads to convey to its banks the produce of the country.

We have given so much attention to this important and interesting subject, that we have not left ourselves space to notice the remainder of Mr. Finlay’s volume. We would only recommend his *Dramatic Criticisms*, as spirited essays on theatrical representations. His ambitious, but halting style we cannot admire. The following extract from his character of the universally respected Chief Justice Bushe, written in 1812, when he was Solicitor General, is perhaps as favourable a specimen as may be found.

“The persuasive powers of this accomplished advocate

must appear, even to the eye of envy, eminent and uncommon. An observer, at first view, would be inclined to suppose that he adopted that method which some recommend, of putting his *strongest* arguments *first* forward; but as the orator proceeds, the listener perceives that a stronger and a stronger still succeeds, each last argument more forcible than the former, until he is astonished at perceiving that the last is the strongest. All this is art.

“When he commences, the mind of the audience is exclusively engaged by admiration of the orator. But as he advances, he imperceptibly withdraws you from the observation of himself to the contemplation of his cause. The client’s hardship gradually swells as he rolls it along the range of incident. The lustre of his talents retire in eclipse behind that picture of misery which he obtrudes on your view. The advocate becomes not only invisible but forgotten; and although your attention to him may be for a moment awakened by his action, or recalled by his language, you chasten your admiration, and are tempted to exclaim, ‘Oh! his task is easy, for his cause is good.’ You are unsuspecting that this growing accumulation of hardship may be nothing more than the mere creature of arrangement. But such is the art of eminent eloquence; it is, indeed, the very nature of true eloquence to make you unconscious that any has been used. Such is the eloquence of Kendal Bushe; and the last impression which he leaves on the mind of his audience is, that the person whose cause he advocates is amongst the most injured and innocent of the community.”

C. E. S.

#### THE ATROPA, OR DEADLY NIGHT-SHADE.

*Atropa*, or Deadly Night-shade, is a genus of the monogynia order, and pentandria class of plants; and in the natural method ranking under the twenty-fifth order, *lurida*, according to Linnaeus. By later botanists it is said to be a genus of dicotyledonous plants belonging to the natural order *solanaceae*, and consisting for the most part of poisonous species. The corolla is campanulate, or bell-shaped; the stamina are distant; the berry is globular, and consists of two cells. There are eight species; but the four following are the most remarkable:—

1. *Atropa belladonna*, though rather a scarce plant, grows wild in many parts of Great Britain and Ireland; and the author of this has had frequent opportunities of seeing it in Earl O’Neill’s park at Shane’s Castle. It has a perennial root, which sends out strong herbaceous stalks of a purplish colour; these rise to the height of four or five feet, garnished with entire oblong leaves, which at autumn change to a purple. The flowers are large, and come out singly between the leaves upon long foot-stalks, bell-shaped, and of a dusky colour on the outside, but purplish within; it flowers in May and June. After the flower is past, the germen turns to a round berry, a little flattened at the top, and about the size of a cherry. It is first green, but when ripe turns to a shining black, and sits close upon the empalement, and contains a purple juice of a nauseous sweet taste, and full of small kidney-shaped seeds. This species, being remarkable for its poisonous qualities, is very seldom admitted into gardens. Mr. Ray gives an account of the symptoms that attend the taking of it into the stomach, by what happened to a mendicant friar upon his drinking a glass of mallow wine in which the herb was infused. In a short time he became delirious, and was soon after seized with a grinning laughter, then with several irregular motions, and at last with real madness, and such a stupidity as those are in when sottishly drunk; but after all, Ray says, he was cured by a draught of vinegar. Buchanan also gives an account of the destruction of the Danes, commanded by their king Sueno, when they invaded Scotland, by mixing a quantity of the belladonna berries with the drink which the Scots were, according to a treaty of truce, to supply them with. This so intoxicated the Danes, that the Scots fell upon them during their delirium, and killed the greater part of them, so that there were scarcely men left to carry off their king. There also have been many instances in Britain of children being killed by eating the berries (half a berry will poison) of the belladonna.

When this unfortunately takes place, that children or others are known to have eaten of the berries, the most speedy means should be resorted to in order to clear the stomach; for this purpose the stomach-pump is the most effectual and surest remedy. Emetics seldom, in this case, excite the stomach to repulsive action, as fourteen grains of tartrate of antimony have been administered without producing any good effect. Vinegar, contrary to Ray and others, should never be given so long as any of the belladonna is in the stomach, as, instead of abating, it heightens its power. Vinegar is exceedingly useful at a later period, in combating the secondary or depressing effects. And in the case of the friar mentioned by Ray, it is highly probable that the belladonna had, by some means or other, been cleared out of the stomach before the friar got the draught of vinegar.

2. *Atropa frutescens* is a native of Spain, and rises with a shrubby stem to the height of six or eight feet; but the flowers are never succeeded by berries in Great Britain or Ireland. The flowers are of a dirty yellow colour, with a few brown stripes.

3. *Atropa herbacea* is a native of Campeachy. The flowers are white, and come out from between the leaves on short foot-stalks. It flowers in July and August, but seldom ripens its fruit in this country.

4. *Atropa mandragora*, the *mandrake*,\* is another species, still more dangerous than the *atropa belladonna*, as being more sudden in its operation. It is found in many parts of Europe, especially in the Grecian Islands, where it is very common. It has been distinguished into male and female; the male mandrake has a very large root. It is largest at the top or head, and thence gradually grows smaller. Sometimes it is single, but more frequently it is parted into two; when thus parted, it is said to resemble the body and thighs of a mare. This circumstance, joined to its poisonous qualities, gave it, in the days of ignorance and superstition, the reputation of being endowed with animal feeling. The roots were said to shriek when torn from the earth; and it was accounted very dangerous and unlucky to disturb them. And even in our own time, the young Greeks, according to Sibthorp, carry small pieces of the root about them as love-charms. This very remarkable plant has no apparent stem, but its long hairy leaves rise, as it were, from the ground, broadest at the middle, and obtusely pointed at the end; they are a foot or more in length, and about five inches in breadth, of a dusky and disagreeable green colour, and of a very fetid smell. The female mandrake perfectly resembles the other in growth, but the leaves are longer and narrower, and of a darker colour, as are also the seeds and roots. It grows naturally in Spain, Portugal, Italy, and the Levant.

The three last species are propagated by seeds, and placed in stoves when reared in this country.

The belladonna has long been admitted into the pharmacopœias of this country, being employed in the form of dried leaves, or of an extract. In a small dose it quickens the action of the heart; in larger doses, though a stimulating action is first produced, yet in a short time a *sedative* effect of a very powerful kind ensues.

*Ballymena.*

J. G.

#### THE MAY-POLE.

We have now reached that period of the year which was formerly dedicated to one of the most splendid and pleasing of our festal rites. The observance of MAY-DAY was a custom which, until the close of the reign of James the First, alike attracted the attention of the Royal and the Noble, as of the vulgar class; and there was scarcely a village in the kingdom but what had a *May-pole*, with its appropriate games and dances.

The origin of these festivities has been attributed to three different sources—*Classic*, *Celtic*, and *Gothic*. The first appears to establish the best claim to the parentage of our May-day rites, as a relique of the *Roman Floralia*,

which were celebrated on the last four days of April, and on the first of May, in honour of the Goddess Flora, and were accompanied with dancing, music, the wearing of gurlands, strewing of flowers, &c. The *Beltein*, or rural sacrifice of the Highlanders on this day, as described by Pennant and Dr. Jamieson, seems to have arisen from a different motive, and to have been instituted for the purpose of propitiating the various noxious animals which might injure or destroy their flocks and herds. The Gothic anniversary on May-day makes a nearer approach to the general purpose of the *Floralia*, and was intended as a thanksgiving to the Sun, if not for the return of flowers, fruit, and grain, yet for the introduction of a better season for fishing and hunting.

It was considered as the boundary day that divides the confines of winter and summer, allusively to which there was instituted a sportful war between two parties; the one, in defence of the continuance of winter, the other for bringing in the summer. The youths were divided into troops, the one in winter livery, the other in the gay habit of spring. The mock-battle was always fought booty; the spring was sure to obtain the victory, which they celebrated by carrying triumphantly green branches with many flowers, proclaiming and singing the song of joy, of which the burden was in these or equivalent terms:—"We have brought the summer home."

With these, the simplest modes of celebrating the rites of May-day, was anciently united the *Morris-dance*, consisting of several characters, which were often varied, both in number, application, and dress. The *Morris* dance is without doubt derived from the *Morisco*, a dance peculiar to the Moors, and generally termed the *Spanish Morisco*, from its notoriety in Spain during the dynasty of that people in the Peninsula. The *Morris-dance* in this country usually consisted of the Lady of the May, the Fool, or domestic buffoon of the 15th and 16th centuries, a Piper, and two, four, or more, *Morris-dancers*. They were originally dressed as Moors with blacked faces, but their habit came afterwards to any species of suitable fantastic dress; and their business was to dance round the May-pole.

#### PORTRAIT OF A RADICAL.

The following very graphic description we copy from a late American paper—"A Radical is a civil fanatic; a Utopian legislator, who builds constitutions in the air, and shapes them with his fancy, as fools do figures in the clouds. He is but a nominal politician; a faithful subject to an ideal government, but a rebel to a real one. Not having wit enough to distinguish between speculation and practice, he throws away the substance, and grasps at the shadow. He contrives very judiciously what might be, and what ought to be, if Providence were but as wise as himself. He follows his own inclination to a form of government, as a bowler follows his bowl when he mistakes the ground, and screws his body the way he would have it run. He forgets that constitutions grow like trees, and fancies they are built like houses. He reduces men to subjection by proving their equality. His constitutions are idiots, who never can be admitted to the management of their own estates, because they never arrive at years of discretion. He is a state empiric, who has nostrums for the maladies of all government; but, being ignorant of their frame, he cannot proportion the dose. He is wonderfully enamoured of a commonwealth, because it is like a common woman, whom every man may solicit; but he hates a monarchy, because it is like an honest wife, true to one. His service to the people is like that of the idolatrous priests to Bel and the Dragon—to eat up their meat and drink up their liquor for them. When he begs a subscription, he is like an Indian juggler who extracts money from his throat. Upon the hustings, or in the chair, he will hold any argument rather than his tongue, which is like a street bagpipe that never stops its drone while the performer can squeeze wind out of its gullet, or cash out of the hearers' pobs. His oratory is the most difficult to cure of all diseases; he drowns you with it as a water spaniel makes a duck dive at its barking. When you congratulate yourself on his speech being ended, it begins again; like a patent gun that discharges nine times for

\* The word *mandrake*, mentioned in Genesis xxx. 14, cannot, I think, refer to the *atropa mandragora*, the root of which is a strong poison; but this is uncertain.